



## News Release

### For Immediate Release

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## ***“Breathing Just Got Easier” in Utah’s Schools*** **On World Asthma Day**

*Utah’s Asthma Inhaler Law Now In Effect*

SALT LAKE CITY – Utah students who suffer from asthma are celebrating a victory on the fifth annual World Asthma Day. The State of Utah’s new Asthma Inhaler Law went into effect on May 3, 2004, allowing children who suffer from asthma to legally carry and use their inhalers while on school grounds.

Alexandra Davis, a fourth grader at Emerson Elementary in Salt Lake City, suffers from severe asthma and carries her inhaler daily. From her own experience, Alexandra is relieved that the new law will help students across Utah who have not been allowed to carry their asthma inhalers. In her words, “I think it’s good for all the kids because they don’t have to suffer without it.”

Passed during the last legislative session, Utah’s Senate Bill 32 was sponsored by Senator Patrice Arent and Representative Pat Jones, two legislators who wanted to establish a uniform, statewide policy for the use of asthma medications by students in Utah’s public schools. Prior to the bill’s passage, school districts across the state had varying and sometimes contradictory policies. While some schools allowed children to keep inhalers with them at all times as long as the medication had been prescribed by a healthcare provider, others required that asthma inhalers remained locked in a medicine cabinet or in the main office.

Now in effect, Utah’s Asthma Inhaler Law eliminates inconsistent policies and allows students to carry and self-administer inhaled asthma medication. The new law requires that a parent provide an authorization and acknowledge in writing that the sharing of any medication could have serious consequences. In addition, a health care provider must verify that it is medically

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appropriate for the student to self-administer and be in possession of asthma medication at all times.

The Utah Department of Health (UDOH) has designed a form that will be distributed to Utah schools and which can be downloaded from the UDOH website at [www.health.utah.gov/asthma](http://www.health.utah.gov/asthma). According to LaDene Larsen, Director of the Bureau of Health Promotion, “We are pleased to be a part of this important legislation. We are confident that the new law will help Utah’s children better manage their asthma, resulting in fewer missed school days and a reduction in the number of asthma-related emergency room visits.”

The Asthma Inhaler Law affects more than 36,000 Utah children under the age of 17 who suffer from asthma. This number equates to 75 elementary schools (or 1200 classrooms) filled with students who suffer from asthma. With authorizations on file at school, Utah’s parents can ensure the continued safety of their children by enabling the effective management of a life-threatening medical condition. Through the UDOH’s new campaign on asthma, students will know on World Asthma Day and every day that *“Breathing Just Got Easier.”*

Individuals interested in learning more about the UDOH’s Asthma Program can contact Mindy Williams at (801) 538-9272 or by e-mail at [mawillia@utah.gov](mailto:mawillia@utah.gov)T.

### **Utah Department of Health Asthma Program**

The Utah Asthma Program was created in December 2001 with the intent to develop the state’s capacity to address asthma. The program is funded through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The goals of the Utah Asthma Program are to create an infrastructure to address asthma from a public health perspective; to create a public health assessment and monitoring system for asthma; to build partnerships and improve partner capacity, and to develop population-based strategies to improve asthma care and management.

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*The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public’s health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.*